TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

CounterPunch

SEPT. 1-15, 2008 ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR VOL. 15, NO. 15

What the Doctors Saw
McCain's Women
By Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair

McCain's charges of sexism against Obama must ring mighty hollow to those who know him best, and we dare say his second wife Cindy would have an acerbic comment or two of her own if freed from all constraints.

The social culture of the Naval Academy at Annapolis shaped McCain. His own recollections of his less than stellar career there focus mainly on his drunken escapades and relentless sexual predations. He met his first wife, Carol, in Annapolis while he was hanging out with the group self-styled "the bad bunch." She left her first husband for him, bringing her two children with her, soon becoming pregnant with Sidney.

On accounts of this period, McCain grew restive, had some affairs and became a fixture on the party circuit. At the end of 1966, he volunteered for active service as a bomber pilot in Vietnam. He was shot down ten months later, and spent the next five and half years as a prisoner of war.

Meanwhile Carol, a former fashion model, was bringing up their three children. During Christmas 1969, while visiting her parents' house, Carol took her car to deliver presents, slid off the icy road, hit a tree, and was hurled through the windshield. Very badly hurt, she lay in the snow for several hours before being discovered.

The accident crushed her hip and mangled her legs so badly that surgeons had to remove large sections of her leg bones, shortening her by 5 inches and leaving her with a limp and in more or less permanent pain. She refused to send word to McCain, saying "he's got enough problems." Ross Perot stepped in to pay

COCKBURN/ST. CLAIR CONT. ON P. 2

Giving Aid and Comfort to the Enemy
McCain's 14th Amendment Problem
By Douglas Valentine

Technically, the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits John McCain from becoming president of the United States.

Section III of the Amendment says, "No person shall … hold any office, civil or military, under the United States … who, having previously taken an oath … as an officer of the United States … to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have … given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof."

It is a fact that McCain was an officer in the U.S. Navy and took an oath to "bear true faith and allegiance" to the Constitution. This was a solemn appeal to Jehovah to smite him silly in the event he lied about or broke his oath. If he fell into captivity, he was bound by the Military Code of Conduct not to answer questions or make any oral or written statements disloyal or harmful to the U.S. To do so was considered collaborating with the enemy, and meant yet another mighty swipe from Jehovah.

It is also a fact that, in 1967, Lieutenant Commander John McCain was shot out of the sky while dropping bombs on North Vietnamese civilians. McCain's plane crashed in a lake, and he suffered some broken bones and was slapped around after he was rescued. And all of that hurt, but none of it reached the Rumsfeld-Bush-Cheney standard for torture. Yet after a mere *four days*, McCain cracked like a robin's egg. He told his captors, "I'll give you military information if you will take me to the hospital."[1]

In his autobiography McCain elaborated, saying, "I gave them my ship's name and squadron number, and confirmed that my target had been the power plant."[2]

It is alleged that McCain gave the numbers of aircraft in his flight formation, information about location of rescue ships, and the order of which his attack was supposed to take place. According to retired Army Colonel Earl Hopper, McCain divulged classified information North Vietnam used to hone their air defense system, including "the package routes, which were routes used to bomb North Vietnam. He gave in detail the altitude they were flying, the direction, if they made a turn … he gave them what primary targets the United States was interested in." As result, Hopper claims, the U.S. lost 60 per cent more aircraft, and in 1968 "called off the bombing of North Vietnam, because of the information McCain had given to them."[3]

What is Jehovah waiting for?

As became evident during the revisionist Republican Convention, McCain's political fortunes balance precariously on the myth that he never collaborated, even under torture. On Saturday, September 6, in Colorado, Sarah Palin wowed the faithful with an apocryphal story that brought tears to their eyes. As McCain stood beside her, feigning humility, she told how "Tom," one of McCain's fellow POWs, would watch through a peephole in his cell as the guards would walk McCain down the hall to the torture chamber. "Day after day after day," Sara said – as if these torture sessions happened to every day for five and a half years – McCain would come back from the waterboard and, as he passed Tom, give the thumb's up and flash a boyish smile.

Forget for a moment that McCain, by his own admission, broke after four days of pain and anxiety and spilled classified military secrets in order to get medical help. After that, was he even tortured at all?

VALENTINE CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her medical bills.

McCain came home in 1973 and, according to friends, was "appalled" at his wife's changed appearance. It wasn't long before he sought comfort with others. His friend Robert Timberg says, "John started carousing and running around with women." Through Perot, he met Ronald Reagan when the latter was governor of California, and both Ron and Nancy became particularly fond of Carol and put her on their payroll.

In 1979 McCain, in his early 40s, met the 25-year-old Cindy Hensley, an heiress to her father's beer distribution empire in Phoenix. It was at a cocktail party in Honolulu. Cindy recalls, "He kind of chased me around the hors d'oeuvres table. I was trying to get something to eat, and I thought, 'This guy's kind of weird.' I was kind of trying to get away from him."

McCain pursued Hensley, inviting her to Washington, D.C. He embarked on an affair with Cindy and suddenly told a stunned Carol that he was leaving her. McCain began living with Cindy in January of 1980. He divorced Carol in April of that year and married Cindy a month later in Frank Lloyd Wright's Biltmore Hotel in Scottsdale.

Friends of Carol were disgusted by McCain's conduct in dumping the wife who had kept the home fires burning through his time as a POW. The Reagans never forgave him and stood firmly by Carol. Nancy Reagan barely consented to endorse McCain this year. McCain recalls, "My divorce from Carol, whom the Reagans loved, caused a change in our relationship. Nancy was particularly upset with me and treated me on the few occasions we encountered each other after I came to Congress with a cool correctness that made her displeasure clear."

In a story in the London *Daily Mail*, Sharon Churcher wrote on June 8 of this year:

"Ross Perot, who paid her medical bills all those years ago, now believes that both Carol McCain and the American people have been taken in by a man who is unusually slick and cruel – even by the standards of modern politics. 'McCain is the classic opportunist. He's always reaching for attention and glory. After he came home, Carol walked with a limp. So he threw her over for a poster girl with big money from Arizona. And the rest is history.'"

Also quoted by Churcher is Ted Sampley, a Special Forces veteran:

"I've been following John McCain's career for nearly 20 years. I know him personally. There's something wrong with this guy. Let me tell you what it is – deceit. When he came home and saw that Carol was not the beauty he left behind, he started running around on her almost right away. Everybody around him knew it. Eventually he met Cindy and she was young and beautiful and very wealthy. At that point McCain just dumped Carol for something he thought was better. This is a guy who makes such a big deal about his character. He has no character. He is a fake. If there was any character in that first marriage, it all belonged to Carol."

Cindy urged a return to Phoenix in part because many in John's circle in Washington, D.C., gave them the cold shoulder. Not only did Cindy pony up for Carol's medical care, but she staked McCain's first congressional race in Arizona in 1982 because the Reagans leaned on the Republican National Committee to turn off the funding tap.

From now on, relations between John and Cindy McCain became remote: he mostly in Washington and she in Phoenix, living across the street from her parents. It was at this point she developed the initial business relationship with Charles Keating, the financier and anti-porn crusader, whose fraudulent operations with Lincoln Savings and Loan nearly derailed McCain's career after exposure of Keating's lavish patronage of McCain as one of his protectors in Congress.

In 1986, Cindy and her father James invested $400,000 in a shopping center being developed by Keating. An indefatigable traveler, given to impulsive excursions around the world in his private jet, Keating took along Cindy and the children and, occasionally, John. Amid these voyages, Cindy developed with Keating the idea of financing the American Voluntary Medical Team (AVMT) to supply aid to disaster-struck areas. Keating, an ardent Catholic, also introduced Cindy to Mother Teresa. This relationship led to Cindy's adoption of a baby born in Bangladesh. The adoption came as a complete surprise to McCain.

These trips and the relationship with Keating attracted the scrutiny of investigators probing McCain for ethical misconduct. Beleaguered by accusations that he had been shielding a top-rung corporate criminal, McCain appears to have blamed his wife for the political millstone Keating had become.

According to two emergency room physicians in Phoenix, interviewed by *CounterPunch*, and who tell us they don't want their names used, it was at this time that Cindy McCain sought medical attention in the Phoenix area for injuries consistent with physical violence: bruises, contusions and a black eye . There were at least two more visits for medical attention in the Phoenix area by Cindy, with similar injuries, between 1988 and 1993.

Perhaps not coincidentally, this was the period during which Cindy developed an addiction to opiate painkillers, including Percocet and Vicodin. She was taking 20 pills a day, with a physician at AVMT writing illegal prescriptions. When one of the employees of AVMT discovered the illegal prescriptions and told the executive director, he was fired. He promptly alerted the Drug Enforcement Agency, which opened up an investigation. Cindy was rushed into a drug treatment center and went into a pretrial diversion program, thus escaping prosecution. She paid for the DEA's investigation. She claimed she became addicted to painkillers because of back pain and the stress associated with Keating's prosecution and conviction. (Keating died in prison.)

COCKBURN/ST. CLAIR CONT. ON P. 5

CounterPunch

EDITORS
ALEXANDER COCKBURN
JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

ASSISTANT EDITOR
ALEVTINA REA

BUSINESS
BECKY GRANT
DEVA WHEELER

DESIGN
TIFFANY WARDLE

COUNSELOR
BEN SONNENBERG

CounterPunch
PO Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558
1-800-840-3683
counterpunch@counterpunch.org
www.counterpunch.org
All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VALENTINE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Ted Guy and Gordon "Swede" Larson were POWs with McCain. Indeed, they were McCain's senior officers at the time he says he was tortured in solitary confinement. Guy and Larson, who have no axe to grind and have a better idea of what happened than almost anyone else, claimed that while they could not guarantee that McCain was not physically harmed, they doubted it. "Between the two of us, it's our belief, and to the best of our knowledge, that no prisoner was beaten or harmed physically in [the camp where McCain was]," Larson said. "No one else in that camp was. It was the camp that people were released from."[4]

Jack McLamb, a distinguished Phoenix Arizona policeman, FBI hostage negotiator and Vietnam veteran with a top-secret security clearance, told Alex Jones that McCain was never tortured. McLamb spoke to several POWs, and they told him that "when [McCain] came in [to the POW camp] he immediately started spilling his guts about everything because he didn't want to get tortured." According to these POWs, the two broken arms McCain had sustained were the result of McCain panicking and not pulling his arms in when he bailed out of plane. (McCain, notably, was a lousy pilot and crashed three planes before being sent to Vietnam.[5])

Let's pretend for a moment that, in the excitement of being nominated for president, McCain has consistently forgotten to correct the record and reveal to the public that he collaborated after four days. Maybe McCain feels that torture justifies collaboration, and that the denial of medical attention is a form of torture? Maybe that is why he feels justified to pretend to be a war hero?

So, is the denial of medical attention a form of torture? Not so, according to former CIA officer Rob Simmons. While running for Congress in 1999, Simmons was accused of torturing civilian prisoners at a secret CIA torture center in Vietnam. The alleged torture occurred, ironically, at the same time McCain was being held in a North Vietnamese POW camp. The specific charge against Simmons, ironically again, was that he would withhold medicine from injured prisoners in order to obtain information.[6]

Did Simmons withhold medicine for an hour? A day? *Four Days*? He didn't say. But he did admit to withholding it, and the practice is standard CIA practice and part of the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld repertoire of "enhanced" interrogation techniques.

Indeed, the U.S. Supreme Court has approved the practice for domestic application by your local constabulary. In 2003, in a 6-3 decision, the Court exonerated several Oxnard, California, cops who withheld medical treatment from a Hispanic suspect they'd shot five times. They claimed they were trying to get him to talk.[7]

According to McLamb, "McCain made 32 propaganda videos for the communist North Vietnamese in which he denounced America for what they were doing in Vietnam."

Could the Republicans do anything more hypocritical than celebrate McCain for being tortured, while they're applauding the U.S. military and CIA for doing the same exact thing worldwide on a daily basis? Of course they could! At the suggestion that denying medicine to prisoners is torture, former CIA officer and Bush-backing congressman from Connecticut Rob Simmons indignantly asserted that "any veteran, anybody who served his country in war, should be offended."[8]

Irrational Behavior

McCain likes to take off his clothes and show the country his war wounds – his "scars," as he calls them – but he is less flashy about his famous psychiatric disabilities. Even his colleagues have noticed the problem. Former Senator Bob Smith (R-NH) was quoted as having said about McCain: "I have witnessed incidents where he has used profanity at colleagues. He would disagree about something and then explode." Smith called it "irrational behavior."[9]

Do we really want an irrational, angry man with his finger on The Button? A man suffering from an incurable case of PTSD? A man who pushed a woman in a wheelchair for merely asking him to do something about her son, who was MIA? What if Putin or Medvedev calls him "a lying skunk?" Bombs away!

No Republican hack is ever going to mention that a guilty conscience is the true source of McCain's "irrational behavior," or that, on June 2, 1969, McCain earned a reputation as the "POW Songbird." On that day, McCain featured on a radio broadcast from Hanoi, aimed at U.S. servicemen in South Vietnam, praising his captors for their excellent medical treatment ("which allowed me to walk again") and admitting he committed "crimes against the Vietnamese country and people. I bombed their cities, towns and villages and caused more injury and death for the Vietnamese people."[10]

"The Vietnamese Communists called him the Songbird," Jack McLamb says. "That's his code name, Songbird McCain, because he just came into the camp singing and telling them everything they wanted to know." According to McLamb, "McCain made 32 propaganda videos for the communist North Vietnamese in which he denounced America for what they were doing in Vietnam."[11]

The Republicans also steer clear of McCain's 1997 interview with Mike Wallace, when McCain blurted that he had murdered "innocent women and children." McCain, apparently having a flashback, confessed to having committed war crimes. "I am a war criminal," he stated on *60 Minutes*. "I bombed innocent women and children."[12]

And by the *9/11* standard, there is no doubt that he is a war criminal and a terrorist. As filmmaker Michael Moore has said, "McCain flew 23 bombing missions over North Vietnam in a campaign called Operation Rolling Thunder. During this bombing campaign, which lasted for almost 44 months, U.S. forces flew 307,000 attack sorties, dropping 643,000 tons of bombs on North Vietnam (roughly the same tonnage dropped in the Pacific during *all* of World War II). Though the stated targets were factories, bridges, and power plants, thousands of bombs also fell on homes, schools, and hospitals. In the midst of the campaign, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara estimated that we were killing 1,000 civilians a week. That's more than one *9/11* every single month – for 44 months."

Palin and Thompson did not mention

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that "one *9/11* every single month" fact – or that the embodiment of Christian character, John McCain, divorced the wife that stood by him while he was a POW after she was crippled in a car accident, in order to marry a trophy wife heiress who stole drugs for two years from a charitable organization of which she was president.

John McCain has been living the Big Lie for so long he probably believes it's true. But he also acts to make sure the truth never gets out.

Like fellow war criminal Rob Simmons, John McCain has not been honest about his war record. But while Simmons signed non-disclosure agreements with the CIA, giving him carte blanche to lie, steal, cheat and murder, McCain has to resort to more devious tactics.

According to the journalist Sydney Schanberg (famous for his coverage of the war in Cambodia), McCain has a "longtime opposition to releasing documents and information about American prisoners of war in Vietnam." On the contrary, "in close cooperation with the Pentagon and the intelligence community [meaning the CIA]," McCain has been successful in legislating into secret "thousands of documents that would otherwise have been declassified long ago."[13]

McCain "says this is to protect the privacy of former POWs and gives it as his reason for not making public his own debriefing. But," Schanberg adds, "the law allows a returned prisoner to view his own file or to designate another person to view it."

To try to parry his critics, McCain gave *Newsweek*'s Michael Isikoff a peak at his records, and Isikoff swore they contained "nothing incriminating," although he acknowledged, "there were redactions."

Why the redactions? This is a question that riles the POW/MIA community, including Jane Duke Gaylor, the woman in the wheelchair McCain pushed. Indeed, many Vietnam veterans, former POWs and their families have criticized McCain for keeping his "and other wartime files sealed up." According to Schanberg, "A smaller number of former POWs, MIA families and veterans have suggested there is something especially damning about McCain that the senator wants to keep hidden."

Could that secret be the politically annihilating fact of his collaboration and its cover-up? Could it be that he made "numerous public statements that appeared favorable to the communist war effort in exchange for 'special treatment.'"[14]

In their elitist wisdom, the Founding Fathers inserted an escape clause in the 14th Amendment. Section III says, "But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability."

McCain's "disability" (if not his PTSD) is thus treatable. All it takes is for some congressperson to bring the matter up for investigation and vote and avoid the Constitutional crisis that would ensue, if the "disability" becomes an issue in the campaign. As my friend Terry said, "If McCain merely appeared in photos posed in clean sheets [in a North Vietnamese hospital], then 2/3rds should quickly vote to forgive him. If, however, he supplied military secrets, McCain should not hold federal office."

McCain is a man of many contradictions. For example, he told Mike Wallace he was a war criminal for murdering Vietnamese civilians. However, according to Fernando Barral, a Cuban psychologist who questioned him in January 1970, "McCain was 'boastful' during their interview and 'without remorse' for any civilian deaths that occurred 'when he bombed Hanoi.'"[15]

McCain had a similar recollection, writing in his [autobiography] that he responded, "No, I do not," when Barral asked if he felt remorse.

On the one hand, "McCain told [Barrel] that he had not been subjected to 'physical or moral violence'" and "lamented in the interview that 'if I hadn't been shot down, I would have become an admiral at a younger age than my father.'"[16]

On the other hand, he's running for president of the United States (an even bigger job than admiral) primarily on the basis of having been tortured. McCain even allows his handlers to claim he only gave "name rank and serial number" when, in his autobiography, he clearly admits to collaborating and says it caused him to attempt suicide.

All this covering-up can take a lot of energy, but it also takes a lot of help, which comes from America's mainstream media and, naturally, the military.

The only way out is a Congressional inquiry into McCain's two disabilities, as a collaborator and a victim of PTSD. Let Congress absolve him of the first disability, as it surely would, and then inquire if the PTSD is under control. Does he need therapy? Can he handle the stresses of being commander in chief?

Alas, this is just as likely to happen as some reporter asking McCain if he collaborated, signed a confession, or committed war crimes.

More likely that Jehovah will smite the

Subscription Information

Subscription information can be found at www.counterpunch.org or call toll-free inside the U.S. 1-800-840-3683

Published twice monthly except July and August, 22 issues a year.

1- year hardcopy edition $45
2- year hardcopy edition $80
1- year email edition $35
2- year email edition $65
1- year email & hardcopy edition $50
1- year institutions/supporters $100
1- year student/low income, $35

Renew by telephone, mail or on our website. For mailed orders please include name, address and email address (if applicable) with payment. To renew by phone 1-800-840-3683 or 1-707-629 3683. Add $17.50 per year for subscriptions mailed outside the U.S.A.

Make checks or money orders payable to:
CounterPunch
Business Office
PO Box 228, Petrolia, CA 95558

CounterPunch Books

Watch for New Titles.
1(800) 840-3683
www.counterpunch.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

potential first dude before he takes his next oath. CP

Douglas Valentine is the author of *The Hotel Tacloban*, *The Phoenix Program*, and *TDY*. His fourth book, *The Strength of the Wolf: The Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1968* received the Choice Academic Excellence Award. The sequel, *The Strength of the Pack*, is being published by University Press of Kansas. For information about Douglas Valentine, and his books and articles, please visit his web sites at www.DouglasValentine.com and http://members.authorsguild.net/valentine. He can be reached at redspruce@comcast.net.

1. John McCain, *U.S. News and World Report*, May 14, 1973.
2. John McCain, *Faith of My Fathers*, pp. 193-194.
3. "John McCain: Privileged 'War Hero,' Liar, Collaborator, Traitor," Part 1, Gerard Kiley's interview with Earl Hopper, http://educate-yourself.org/cn/earlhopperinterviewo8febo8.shtml.
4. Amy Silverman, "Is John McCain a War Hero," March 25, 1999, Phoenix *New Times*.
5. Alex Jones, "Prison Planet," February 8, 2008, interview with Jack McLamb.
6. "Justice Takes a Beating," *L.A. Times*, May 28, 2003.
7. "Justice Takes a Beating," *L.A. Times*, May, 28, 2003.
8. *New London Day*, May 1999.
9. NewsMax.com, July 5, 2006.
10. Cannon, Eugene. UPI report, June 2, 1969. http://www.vietnamveteransagainstjohnmccain.com/McCAIN%20RADIO%20BROADCAST%20from%20Ha%20Noi%20060269.pdf.
11. Alex Jones, "Prison Planet," February 8, 2008, interview with Jack McLamb.
12. Ted Rall, CommonDreams.org. February 6, 2008.
13. Sydney Schanberg, "The War Secrets Sen. John McCain Hides: Former POW Fights Public Access to POW/MIA Files," New York (APBnews.com), April 25, 2000.
14. Ted Sampley, "U.S. Veteran Dispatch," November 1999. Follow this link to a good photo: http://www.usvetdsp.com/mcianhro.htm.
15. Manuel Roig-Franzia, *Washington Post* Foreign Service, Tuesday, March 11, 2008; Co1
16. Manuel Roig-Franzia, *Washington Post* Foreign Service, Tuesday, March 11, 2008; Co1

COCKBURN/ST. CLAIR CONT. FROM P. 2

Cindy's addiction came as a shock to McCain. Her parents, who apparently had closer contact with her, did notice and attempted some interventions.

A somewhat eerie insight into McCain's psyche can be found in his version of an ape joke that was popular in the mid-1980s. The usual version ran along the following lines. A flight attendant is the sole survivor of a crash in the African forest. She meets an ape, who makes her his mistress. Eventually, she gets home and confides her experience to a friend, who exclaims, "That's terrible."

"There's nothing better than . . . watching the Navy SEALs run up and down the beach. That's a great way to live."

"How many days a month do you see your husband now?" "Not many. Two or three, maybe."

"It is," the flight attendant wails sadly. "He never calls, he never writes."

McCain's very violent version of this joke was reported in the *Tucson Citizen*, on October 27, 1986: "McCain: Did you hear the one about the woman who is attacked on the street by a gorilla, beaten senseless, raped repeatedly and left to die? When she finally regains consciousness and tries to speak, her doctor leans over to hear her sigh contently and to feebly ask, 'Where is that marvelous ape?'"

Relations between the couple became publicly acrid. In his 1992 Senate bid, McCain was joined on the campaign trail by his wife Cindy, as well as campaign aide Doug Cole and consultant Wes Gullett. At one point, Cindy playfully twirled McCain's hair and said, "You're getting a little thin up there." As Cliff Schecter tells it in his 2008 book *The Real McCain*, "McCain's face reddened, and he responded, 'At least I don't plaster on the makeup like a trollop, you cunt.' McCain's excuse to three Arizona reporters who witnessed the scene (and who never mentioned the outburst at the time) was that it had been a long day.

In his book, Schecter also writes that an AP reporter "recounted to me seeing John McCain wander off into the Red Light District of Hanoi in 1996, when he was there to normalize relations with the Vietnamese," and that "a few reporters told me that the McCains don't really live together anymore, and that until the presidential campaign Cindy McCain was spending much of her time in San Diego with their daughter Bridgette, because her husband was just not Johnny-on-the-spot anymore."

Cindy found San Diego agreeable, and John was almost always far, far away. In 2007, she was asked by *San Diego Magazine*, "When the election's over, do you think you might consider a western White House in Coronado?" "Absolutely. I love Coronado. Listen, to me there's nothing better than waking up and seeing the sun come up over the water on the bay there and watching the Navy SEALs run up and down the beach. That's a great way to live." "How many days a month do you see your husband now?" "Not many. Two or three, maybe." *CounterPunch* has noticed that in recent weeks, when political circumstance brought briefly them together, Cindy had her arm in a sling and featured a bandaged wrist. The McCain campaign said it was repetitive handshaking disorder. Maybe. On the other hand, McCain publicly joked this summer about how "I stopped beating my wife just a couple of weeks ago." (This was in Nevada, in an interview with the *Las Vegas Sun*.)

The year has been trying for Cindy. On February 21, the *New York Times* described at great length how, during his first White House run in 2000, McCain had developed a close relationship with a young blonde lobbyist Vicki Iseman. The couple had taken frequent flights together on corporate jets as she tried to convince him to favor the telecom companies she was lobbying for. His staffers were so vexed at the indiscreet association that they ordered her blocked from McCain's office. During the tense press conference after the *Times* story, Cindy's frozen face was widely noted. Her inner thoughts may perhaps have been directed toward the yoga instructor in San Diego, reckoned by some in the yoga community in that city to be a source of consolation to the Hensley beer heiress. CP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Future of Indentured Scholarship

Payback Time: The Student Who Decided Not To be a Spook

By David Price

A decade ago, Nicolas Flattes, an anthropology student at the University of Hawai'i, was awarded a Boren Scholarship from the National Security Education Program (NSEP), then a relatively new funding source for students in the social sciences studying foreign cultures of strategic interest to U.S. policy makers. Flattes' NSEP scholarship allowed him to travel abroad to study food security issues and sustainable agriculture in southern India, in a gender development studies program focusing on nongovernmental organizations' community initiatives.

Flattes signed a standard NSEP contract stating that after graduation he would work at an approved U.S. governmental agency dealing with national security issues, by posting his resume on NSEP's website or applying to specific federal agencies. All NSEP scholars enter into such payback agreements – though there are conflicting accounts of what participants have been told they must do to meet these demands.

Back in the pre-9/11 days of 1998, Flattes was comfortable with the prospect of fulfilling this national security work after graduation. But the radical shift in militaristic foreign and domestic policy and the ascendancy of unchecked powers for U.S. intelligence agencies quelled Flattes' desire to work in any national security capacity by the time he graduated.

When Flattes completed his Master's degree in June 2001, he posted his resume as he was required to do under the guideline and he went on to other things. Flattes had no further contact with NSEP until two months ago, when he received a letter from the Department of Defense (eventually forwarded from a decade-old address) notifying him that he must either begin work for a U.S. agency involved in national security work, or repay the cost of his scholarship along with penalties. As the parent of a young child, Flattes works part time and lives on limited income. Upon receiving the letter, he contacted NSEP and tried to work out a five-year payment plan but was told he could either begin work at national security related position (which would both forgive the debt and provide a salary), or he must repay his loan over a two-year period. After some discussion, he was told he could pay off his loan in three years. Flattes could afford a four-year repayment schedule, but on his budget a three-year schedule was impossible.

NSEP personnel told Flattes that a four-year repayment plan was out of the question, and that if he did not meet

Flattes raises the possibility that National Security Education Program may be using his debt to pressure him to get him to do classified national security work.

NSEP's demands he would have to pay a 28 per cent penalty, could have his wages garnished, and collections would be turned over to a private collection agency. Flattes says he left messages for Boren Scholarship and Fellowship Director Christopher Powers, saying he was sending the first of his four-year payments. Flattes described a bizarre episode that occurred after he sent the first of his four-year payments via Canadian Registered Purolator service, when he received a frightening phone call from someone claiming that FBI and D.C. police were investigating the letter he'd sent as a suspected anthrax scare, and they demanded to know the contents of the envelope. The check Flattes sent to NSEP was never signed for, and he believes this was done to produce a trail of plausible deniability, allowing NSEP to claim he was in default so that they could increase pressure on him to seek national security related work.

After NSEP failed to accept his payment, Flattes received a letter from the Treasury Department demanding repayment of his NSEP scholarship with an added 28 per cent penalty. Flattes' believes that NSEP "had no intention of setting up a payment plan and wanted to turn the matter over to another agency as soon as possible." Flattes felt like he was "being shaken down by a loan shark in a government suit," but instead of being given the choice between paying up now or taking a tire-iron to his kneecap, he was told he could either come up with payments beyond his budget, sell his skills for national security work as part of a terror war he does not support, or he could have his credit rating decimated. Not pleasant choices for a man with a conscience and a child to feed. Flattes acknowledges that he must pay back his scholarship funds. What he objects to is NSEP's harsh tactics and their efforts to pressure him into national security work.

Flattes questions what events triggered the push for him to fulfill his service requirement at this particular point in time. The NSEP service agreement he signed in 1998 did not specify when this service must be completed (today, the program requires services within three years of graduation). Because Flattes served as a Cryptologic Technician Technical in the U.S. Navy from 1985-1989, he believes the NSEP's actions could be an effort designed to press him back into service involving intelligence work. In the Navy, Flattes specialized in Electronic Intelligence where he obtained "a security clearance that was two levels above Top Secret which is rare for enlisted personnel. This field has definite links and cooperation with U.S. intelligence agencies. Basically you work for one, you work for all in a sense." Flattes says he had specialized training in areas that would now be of direct interest to intelligence agencies regardless of specific changes over the last two decades, and he can't help but wonder if his NSEP debt is being used to try and leverage him into intelligence work that he is unwilling to undertake in the current political setting.

The significance of the NSEP's pressure on Flattes is not that he has to pay back his scholarship funds: he contractually agreed to do this when he signed his NSEP contract. The significance of Flattes' account is threefold: first, Flattes raises the possibility that NSEP may be using his debt to pressure him to get him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to do classified national security work; second, it documents the forms of coercion awaiting participants in intelligence and national security payback scholarship programs, who come to think better of working in national security settings once they finish their education; finally, his treatment counters claims that scholars participating in NSEP will not later be forced to either complete their national security requirements or pay back funds with penalties.

Perhaps the most unusual element of Flattes' case is that we, the public, have some knowledge of it. Flattes' willingness to speak out helps establish how the coercive potential of NSEP and other national security linked payback programs leverage scholars into governmental service supporting policies that they personally oppose. Because of the private nature of the repayment demands, it is unknowable how routine such high-pressure demands are.

Institutional privacy policies prevented Boren Scholarship Director, Christopher Powers, from commenting on the specifics of Flattes' case, but he did tell me that the "vast majority of [NSEP funded scholars] to date have fulfilled the program's service requirement through a variety of jobs throughout the federal sector and in higher education." But the public does not know how many former NSEP recipients have caved to the program's demands and quietly slunk off to work for the CIA, NSA, FBI, Homeland Security or other agencies designated to meet contractual obligations of servitude. We don't know how many NSEP scholarship recipients later work in intelligence or national security settings. That some meet their payback requirements in ways that have little or nothing directly to do with national security does not diminish the significance of those who do, and such connections between scholars and national security are the stated reason for NSEP existence.

Since its inception in 1991, controversy has surrounded the NSEP's payback requirements. During the 1990s, several professional associations, including the African Studies Association, Latin American Studies Association and the Middle East Studies Association, formally opposed the acceptance of NSEP funds.

Over the past decade, some NSEP recipients have told me that they were informally told by academic advisers and others that student wouldn't really have to undertake national security work at a later date and that the program's obligations were routinely downplayed when they applied to the program. Some NSEP scholars have been told that if they later find work teaching in universities, their national security service requirement may be considered met, though the wording of contracts has varied on this point over the years. For example, Flattes' 1998 NSEP service agreement states his agreement to be "employed in a national security position in the Federal Government or work in the field of higher education in [his] study-related area," while current Boren Scholarships information states

Is a student loans debt being used to try and leverage its recipient into intelligence work that he is unwilling to undertake in the current political setting?

that fulfilling NSEP national security requirements by working in education "is available only after exhausting all opportunities to fulfill the requirement in the Federal Government in accordance with conditions established by NSEP." Current NSEP scholars banking on a career in academia as a hedge against required national security work underestimate the odds of securing such work and risk facing the same sort of coercion as Flattes is experiencing.

Misinformation on NSEP's payback requirements is widespread. Back in 2000, after I criticized NSEP's payback obligations in *The Nation*, Adam Frank, then an anthropology graduate student doing NSEP sponsored research in Shanghai, wrote a letter to *The Nation* complaining that I had misrepresented NSEP's payback requirements. Frank claimed that he and other NSEP scholars really didn't have to fulfill their NSEP contracts payback clause, that all they had to do was post "their resume to the NSEP website (beyond that they are neither assisted in finding government work nor compelled to do so)."

In my reply to Frank, I quoted chapter and verse of the NSEP contract requiring that he and other NSEP recipients seek employment with NSEP-approved national security oriented agencies, and reminded him that failure to meet these demands could lead to repayment of the NSEP funds with interest and penalties. I also pointed out the ethical requirements for NSEP recipients to disclose funding sources to those they study – skeptically adding that I was *sure* that Frank had followed basic anthropological ethical guidelines and notified his university Institutional Review Board and those he was in contact with in China that his research was sponsored by a contract requiring future national security employment.

While NSEP's payback requirements can be coercive and create problems for student-researchers needing to inform research subjects of unknown future commitments to national security agencies, NSEP's problems seem minuscule when compared to other new payback programs. In 2004, the Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars (PRISP) and the Intelligence Community Scholars Program (ICSP) began providing funds exceeding over $40,000 a year to students. Both programs carry career-breaking penalties for scholars who might later decide they did not wish to work for the specific intelligence agencies to which they are linked. ICSP's payback clause states that recipients, who like Flattes later decide they cannot in good conscience work for intelligence agencies, must pay back the amount of the funds, plus "the interest on the amounts of such awards which would be payable if at the time the awards were received they were loans bearing interest at the maximum legal prevailing rate, as determined by the Treasurer of the United States, *multiplied by three*." It is small consolation, but Flattes should be glad he's not being hounded by ICSP or PRISP, whose levels of draconian usury would have transformed Flattes' modest scholarship's principle over the past decade into a debt equivalent with the value of a house.

Even within the ranks of those participating in various national security linked payback programs, there exists an informal hierarchy of disdain. The secrecy, front-end linkage with intelligence agencies, and the extreme levels of servitude of the PRISP and ICSP programs give

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the willies to some NSEP loyalists. When PRISP first appeared on the scene, one scholar who had received NSEP funds in graduate school and later worked with NSEP in another capacity wrote to me that "NSEP is very upset about the PRISP fellowship because they feel they'll be tainted by it, because they don't like the secrecy aspects, and because they fear some enterprising young PRISP-er could end up being killed and/or could threaten NSEP-ers in the field. As you probably know, NSEP recipients are not allowed to be working for the government in any capacity during the period of their award."

Like these other payback programs, NSEP holds the potential of becoming a revolving door between the worlds of academia and national security. Nicolas Flattes wonders if NSEP and other national security payback programs are now providing a way for U.S. intelligence agencies to get around the ban limiting intelligence personnel from traveling to foreign countries or maintaining contact with individuals in countries listed as hostile.

Flattes observes that "there are two reasons given for this ban. One is that an intelligence operative may accidentally reveal security secrets to an agent from a hostile country. The other reason is that an operative may be influenced or bribed by an agent from a hostile country and intentionally compromise national security. I think this has a great bearing on the NSEP, PRISP, and other similar government programs. Since an intelligence agent is usually unable to travel in or to a hostile or unfriendly, country this makes academics good surrogates and even undergraduate students could be a useful intelligence tool. They can travel freely, and have no obvious association with an intelligence agency. They can provide invaluable information about countries and places that U.S. intelligence agents are unable to visit."

Flattes sees these payback programs as providing unique opportunities for those who will face travel and contact restrictions when they later work in the intelligence community.

Flattes and all students facing hard choices on how to pay for their education have my sympathy. The education industry's means and relations of production provide increasingly narrow choices for students not of independent means, and as American foreign policy becomes ever more tied to invasion, occupation and counterinsurgency, the state's needs for social science swell. Programs like the Robert Gates Minerva Consortium provide funds for scholars located outside the government's walls in ways that simultaneously subdue what might have been independent academic critiques of national policy while producing knowledge for the state and empire; while indentured payback programs like NSEP, ICSP, and PRSIP can help produce those who can harness and use knowledge within the walls of government. Through such financial means academics are increasingly becoming if not comfortable, then compliant appendages of the state. **CP**

David Price is the author of *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War*, published by Duke University Press. He can be reached at dprice@stmartin.edu.

CounterPunch
PO Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558

Phone 1-800-840-3683 or visit our website to find out about CounterPunch's new books.

1st Class
Presort
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 269
Skokie, IL

First Class

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED